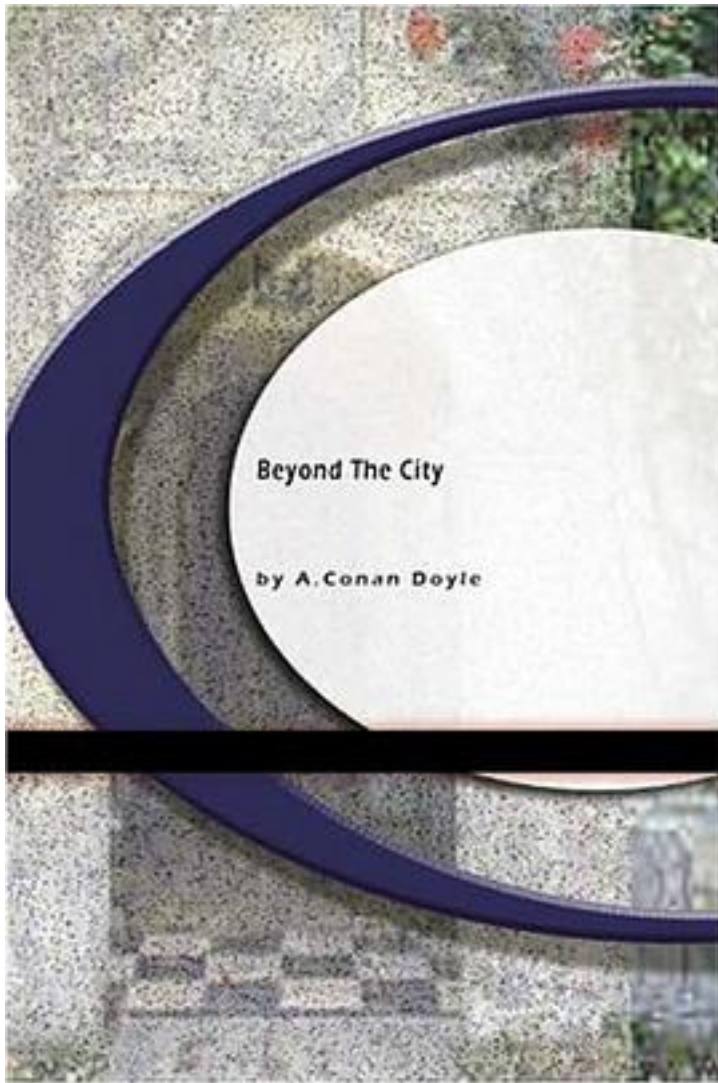


Beyond The City



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If you please, mum, said the voice of a domestic from somewhere round the angle of the door, "number three is moving in. Two little old ladies, who were sitting at either side of a table, sprang to their feet with ejaculations of interest, and rushed to the window of the sitting-room. "Take care, Monica dear," said one, shrouding herself in the lace curtain; "don't let them see us. "No, no, Bertha. We must not give them reason to say that their neighbors are inquisitive. But I think that we are safe if we stand like this." The open window looked out upon a sloping lawn, well trimmed and pleasant, with fuzzy rosebushes and a star-shaped bed of sweet-william. It was bounded by a low wooden fence, which screened it off from a broad, modern, new metaled road. At the other side of this road were three large detached deep-bodied villas with peaky eaves and small wooden balconies, each standing in its own little square of grass and of flowers. All three were equally new, but numbers one and two were curtained and sedate, with a human, sociable look to them; while number three, with yawning door and unkempt garden, had apparently only just received its furniture and made itself ready for its occupants. A four-wheeler had driven up to the gate, and it was at this that the old ladies, peeping out bird-like from behind their curtains, directed an eager and questioning gaze.

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目录:

[Beyond The City_ 下载链接1](#)

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[Beyond The City_ 下载链接1](#)

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